



Adopt a Waterway

Case Study - HFC Bank Birmingham

HFC Bank Environmental Group Adoption Project

HFC Bank has an environment group who were looking for a community project near to their office in the centre of Birmingham and they felt that the adjacent canal network was a perfect place for them to assist the community and clean up the area.

They contacted British Waterways and the Birmingham Network Canal Society with a view to providing resources and volunteers for a year-long campaign to continue to keep the canal side and tow path clear.

Location

HFC Bank and British Waterways settled upon a stretch of the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal from the Saturday Bridge to the Farmers Lock Bridge in the Snow Hill area of Birmingham as suitable for adoption, approximately one mile. This is right outside their office and used by many of their staff as their route to work. It is important that the scope and breadth of an adoption is clearly defined early on to allow for optimum use of resources and establish definable targets.

What Are They Doing

It is important to establish at the start of an adoption the type of activities that will take place. These can vary from waterway maintenance tasks such as towpath clearing, lock painting, graffiti removal and general cleaning to organising group events such as guided walks, boat trips, cycling along the towpath etc. HFC Bank performed an initial review of their stretch and decided to concentrate initially on removing graffiti, painting locks and bridges, removing weeds and installing benches.

Crucially, HFC Bank quickly set up a warden system whereby volunteer staff regularly patrol their waterway stretch to ensure it remains clean and tidy and is not attracting unruly elements who like to update the graffiti for example.

British Waterways Volunteer Adoption Schemes

There is an enormous volunteering strength in people's desire to make a difference to their community and British Waterways form a part of this by establishing local waterway adoption schemes.

Adoptions can form the heart of a community and local businesses and groups can play a central role in improving facilities and promoting canals and rivers to their communities by formally adopting a stretch of waterway.

Adoption volunteering can take a variety of forms, for example by recording and improving wildlife habitats, taking part in practical work parties, promoting the waterway to other local people and running events and guided walks. Adoptions increase local ownership, build relationships with British Waterways at a local level and give local communities a say in their local waterway.

British Waterways Adoption schemes normally run for an initial period of time (*minimum of 12 months*) with the option to continue onwards. A prerequisite of becoming an adopter is that the organisation or group has close proximity (*5 miles*) to the stretch of waterway under review.

Adoption schemes are about local communities having a real impact on a section of waterway and vice versa.

Therefore they need to cover no more than approximately one mile of waterway.



Becoming a British Waterways Adopter

Adopters essentially work with British Waterways to make improvements to their local waterway for the benefit of the local people and all waterway users.

Suitable candidates to engage in an Adopter Volunteer Agreement could be :-

- Local businesses
- Schools
- Community groups such as environment societies, waterway interest organisations or 'friends of the waterway' etc
- Parish Councils
- Residential Associations

An adoption scheme could be taken up by any of the above or in conjunction with each other.

British Waterways provide all the training, supervision and materials where possible to support the adoption. In some cases the group can be self supervising.



If you are interested in becoming a British Waterways waterway adopter, please contact:

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www.waterscape.com/adoptions